

Statement of Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis
Floor Statement
National Parks
June 25, 2002

Thank you very much Congressman Blumenauer, and I really appreciate the opportunity to have this special hour dedicated to our parks. Because as we do go into our holiday season preparing for the 4th of July there is going to be over 60 million people that will visit our nation's national parks. And national parks create a place for families to recreate, to enjoy each other, to enjoying natural resources and learn about the world around us. And all of our parks to me are National Treasures. And I know to many people and some of our most used parks are ones that I represent in my own district in the San Gabriel Valley in East Los Angeles out in California and let me tell you its surprising the studies that I have seen regarding park space is despicable, when it comes to low income communities and where the individuals don't have the opportunity to have open space. In fact according to the study by the University of California Sustainable Cities Program, 3 to 4 acres of open space or green space are needed per 1000 people to be considered a health environment. But in my own district in Los Angeles there is less than a half-acre per 1000 people. Can you imagine that, packed in like sardines. Communities like mine are in need of park opportunities and they are waiting for this relief now. In the 2003 budget the President has eliminated funding for urban parks and Recreating Recovery Program. A program that provides 29 million dollars annually to urban communities to preserve park land and develop recreational opportunities in communities. Oddly enough, this administration recently towed it, the Urban Park Grants for 2002, as one of the accomplishments despite their intention to defend it. The President claims that it is time to tighten our financial belts and merely maintain parks that we have now. The administration says they don't want to add any new parks but in fact as my colleague says back in February President Bush signed a bill creating the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home National Historic Site. Meanwhile other bills are lingering in Committee waiting to be heard and I happened to have a bill waiting to be heard. It is HR 2966, is would create a study to find out if we could create a National Park for Cesar Chavez, a leading figure in the Latino Community who fought on behalf of farm workers, fought against the use of pesticides, farm workers and looking for equal justice for all people, for all workers. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have the first National Park to recognize a Latino leader in the United States? I ask that question because its time, our communities are diverse and it turns out that recent polling that I have seen indicates that the Latino or Hispanic Community is indeed in favor of open space and open parks and more, more space so they can have the ability to recreate.

And what's happening? We are going in the opposite direction. We are not enough to diversify and allow for urban parks established even, and I have another bill that will be heard shortly in our Resources committee to establish one of hopefully a study for one of the largest urban parks in California. Currently a

state conservancy exists in our community known as the River Mountain Conservancy where over 7 million people live alongside the river that covers 31 miles. I would hope the administration and colleagues on the other side would work with us in a bipartisan manner so that more funding will go into parks and recreation. Our communities need it, our urban America needs it and the diversity of our country desires that. So I yield back the balance of my time.